United Nations E/AC.51/2003/L.5/Add.36

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
7 July 2003

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Forty-third session
9 June to 3 July 2003
Agenda item 9
Adoption of the report of the Committee on the work of its forty-third session

Rapporteur: Mr. Jerry **Kramer** (Canada)

Addendum

Programme questions: proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 (item 4 (b))

Programme 23: Public information

1. At its 7th meeting, on 12 June 2003, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005.[1] It had before it proposals in respect of programme 23, Public information (A/58/90, annex).

2. The representative of the Secretary-General introduced programme 23 and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the programme.

Discussion

3. Support was expressed for the revised operating model for the Department of Public Information, which aims to improve its ability to deliver effective and targeted information programmes. The view was expressed that the mandate of the Department is complemented by a new mission statement, which will assist the Department to operationalize the mandate. Appreciation was expressed for the usefulness of the information disseminated by the Department through the United Nations web site.

4. The view was expressed that the Secretary-General should be encouraged to expeditiously implement those elements of reform under his sole authority, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions and decisions already adopted. In that regard, support was expressed for the concrete initiatives taken in

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recent months concerning the restructuring of the Department of Public Information and the improvement of the United Nations library services.

5. Significant interest was shown in the rationalization of the United Nations information centres around regional hubs. Some delegations expressed strong support for that initiative and urged that the momentum be maintained for progress in other regions. A regional hub would be created in Western Europe to replace nine country-level offices. Concern was also expressed that decisions had been taken without prior consultations with concerned Member States as stated in paragraph 15 of General Assembly resolution 57/300. Doubt was expressed that the rationalization of the information centres could be implemented before the prior approval of the proposed programme budget for 2004-2005 for the Department of Public Information. The Committee was informed that that initiative had been mandated in resolution 57/300 and that the intention to proceed accordingly had been made well known. Views were expressed, however, that regionalization should not result in people in the developing countries being denied access to United Nations information. Clarification was sought on the interpretation of paragraph 15 of resolution 57/300, in which the Assembly, inter alia, "takes note of the proposal of the Secretary-General contained in action 8 of his report,[2] to rationalize the network of United Nations information centres around regional hubs". The Committee was informed that the Assembly's request for a progress report on the implementation of the proposal constituted authority to proceed. That was the basis for the proposal contained in the proposed revision to the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 and the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005.[3] Regionalization in Western Europe would be applied, and the objective of applying that initiative in other regions had been set out in resolution 57/300. It was indicated that there had been no discussion related to a similar arrangement in any other region.

6. With regard to the United Nations information centres, it was stated that the concept of regional hubs was a valid one from the viewpoint of improving efficiency. It was also stated that, in considering a system of regional hubs, it was important to weigh what would be lost by closing existing information centres against the merits created through the reinforced activities. In that connection, it was further stated that the overall support of a host Government should be reflected in plans to implement the proposal of the Secretary-General to rationalize the network of United Nations information centres around regional hubs.

7. Concerns were also expressed, on the other hand, regarding the negative implications of the process of regionalizing the information centres for, it was stated, it could worsen the delivery of adequate information in regions, such as Latin America, where distances and difficulties in access to new technologies made the presence of information centres necessary.

8. Views were expressed that priority areas for the work of the Department should be guided by the revised medium-term plan as well as by the Millennium Declaration.

9. The view was also expressed that expected accomplishments and indicators of achievements were not well formulated, did not cover major areas of work and presented very little useful information on the outcomes. The objectives concerning improving the management of library operations and revitalizing the Publications Board should have been set out, for example. It was observed that the description of

the overall orientation of the Department omitted any reference to the progress of changes promised in the reform process, such as an evaluation of all activities. It was suggested that the responsibility of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library for implementing subprogramme 3, in coordination with other United Nations libraries, should be discharged within the framework of the recommendations of the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries.

10. The importance of multilingualism was stressed, and strong support was expressed for the Department's effort in that area. The importance of the dissemination of information in local languages for local populations was stressed. The view was expressed that multilingualism should be included in the indicators.

11. The view was expressed that information in local languages had the strongest impact on the local population, and that paragraph 23.11 of the proposed revisions should reflect that important element in accordance with paragraph 37 of General Assembly resolution 57/130 B.

12. It was noted that the Department intended to conduct guided tours and briefing programmes in New York, Geneva and Vienna, as outlined in paragraph 23.8 of the proposed revisions. The importance of ensuring equal treatment of public information activities in all United Nations Offices was stressed. Concerns were expressed that the Department's intentions for activities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi were not reflected in the revised medium-term plan.

13. It was noted that the efforts were made to include the provisions of General Assembly resolution 57/7 of 4 November 2002 in the revised medium-term plan, more specifically in subprogramme 1. Views were expressed that the advocacy role and public information activities in support of Africa's development should not be limited to subprogramme 1, but should also be reflected in subprogramme 2. In that context, it was suggested that the Department's efforts would be further enhanced by utilizing United Nations Radio and United Nations News, in addition to the use of quarterly publications, brochures and web-only articles.

Conclusions and recommendations

14. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session give further consideration to the proposed revisions to programme 23, Public information, of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005, subject to the following modifications:**

Paragraph 23.1

Replace the first two sentences with the following: "The overarching mandate of the Department is in General Assembly resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946 and its primary mission is to provide, through its outreach activities, accurate, impartial, comprehensive and timely information to the public on the tasks and responsibilities of the United Nations in order to strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization with the greatest transparency, respecting existing mandates and in line with rules 5.6 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, to focus its message and concentrate its efforts better and, as a

function of performance management, to match its programmes with the needs of its target audiences, on the basis of improved feedback and evaluation mechanisms as set out in the General Assembly resolution 57/130 B."

In the last sentence, after the words "has been formulated", insert the words "as welcomed by the Committee on Information,".

Paragraph 23.2

In the fourth sentence, after the words "by the reform efforts of the Secretary-General," insert the following: "as approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/300."

In the fifth sentence, before the words "laid down by the General Assembly", add the words "in the medium-term plan."

Paragraph 23.7

In the third sentence, after the words "around regional hubs", insert the words "where appropriate, in consultation with concerned Member States".

Paragraph 23.9

After the words "on priority issues", add the words "drawing on the broad framework set out in the medium-term plan".

Paragraph 23.10

In the second sentence, delete the words "and established by the Secretary-General".

In the last sentence, after the words "on priority issues", add the words "drawing on the broad framework set out in the medium-term plan and the Millennium Declaration, which was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 55/2".

In the last sentence, delete the words "as its guide".

Paragraph 23.11

Replace the second sentence with "Under the guidance of the Information Centres Service at Headquarters, the United Nations information centres and information components, and regional hubs, as applicable, will play a significant role in disseminating information about the work of the Organization to the peoples of the world, including the areas outlined in the Untied Nations Millennium Declaration, and the information centres, as the 'field voice' of the Department of Public Information, and will work through local intermediaries to promote public awareness of and mobilize support for the work of the United Nations at the local level, bearing in mind that information in the local languages has the strongest impact on the local populations."

Paragraph 23.13

After the words "communication strategies on those issues;", delete the word "and" and add the words "enhanced capacity of the Department to collaborate usefully and actively with clients to deliver the messages of the United Nations; and".

Paragraph 23.14

After the words "regional hubs", add the words "where appropriate, in consultation with concerned Member States."

Paragraph 23.15

Replace the words "the percentage of clients" with the words "the number and percentage of clients, including media and civil society,".

Paragraph 23.17

After the last sentence, add:

"The subprogramme will support the efforts of the Strategic Communications Division to strengthen the advocacy role and public information activities of the United Nations in support of Africa's development initiatives, as outlined in General Assembly resolution 57/7 of 4 November 2002".

Paragraph 23.20

After the word "strengthened", add the words "with the goal of achieving full parity among the six official languages of the United Nations and enhancing the capacity of other languages".

Paragraph 23.21

After the words "would include", add the words "(a) a high level of".

Add a comma after the words "United Nations" and replace the words "in addressing the priority issues before the Organization." with the words "drawing on the broad framework set out in the medium-term plan; and (b) the availability of all relevant information in various languages, in particular, the six official languages of the United Nations web site.".

Paragraph 23.22

After the words "would include the", insert the words "(a) number and".

Delete the period at the end of the sentence and add the following: "; and (b) the percentage of the pages of the web site available in the six official languages of the United Nations.".

Paragraph 23.24

Replace the first sentence with following: "Within the Department of Public Information, the responsibility for implementing the subprogramme lies with the Outreach Division, within which Dag Hammarskjöld Library has the

responsibility for coordination with other United Nations libraries and libraries of the wider United Nations system."

Paragraph 23.30

At the end of the paragraph, replace the words "the Millennium Declaration as a guide" with the words "the medium-term plan as a guide and taking into consideration General Assembly resolution 55/2 containing the Millennium Declaration".

15. **The Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to make proposals, as a matter of priority, to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, through the Committee on Information, in order to ensure the application of common principles and criteria for the provision of guided tours and briefing programmes at all United Nations duty stations, in order to ensure a common approach that places all duty stations on the same footing.**

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 6* (A/57/6/Rev.1).

[2] See A/57/488.

[3] A/58/6 (Sect. 28).

United Nations E/AC.51/2003/L.5/Add.37

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
7 July 2003

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Forty-third session
9 June-3 July 2003
Agenda item 9
Adoption of the report of the Committee on its forty-third session

Rapporteur: Mr. Jerry **Kramer** (Canada)

Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation

(Item 4 (c))

Proposed evaluation themes

1. At its 2nd and 3rd meetings on 9 June 2003, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the proposed evaluation themes (E/AC.51/2003/2).

2. The representative of the Office of Internal Oversight Services introduced the report. Representatives of the Office responded to the questions raised during the Committee's consideration of the report.

Discussion

3. The proposal to conduct thematic evaluations on a pilot basis was welcomed as innovative and valuable. The evaluations would fill a gap by providing a systematic review of activities that required concomitant actions by several programmes of the organizations. Agreement was expressed on the criteria for selecting the thematic evaluations, which follow the criteria used for selecting in-depth evaluations. It was noted that the criteria could be refined with experience. The consultative approach to choosing the themes to be considered by the Committee was also welcomed. It was noted that the two themes proposed, namely, integrated water management and post-conflict peace-building, were of high priority and interest.

4. Diverse views were expressed on which theme to select. It was observed that any of the topics listed in table 1 of the report could be selected. Strong interest was

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expressed in favour of choosing the topic of integrated water management, in light of the recent priority accorded the subject in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

5. Substantial interest was also expressed in the second topic, post-conflict peace-building. As the Office of Internal Oversight Services could not undertake two thematic evaluations at the same time, it was suggested that this topic could be resubmitted for consideration by the Committee at a later date.

6. The view was expressed that water is only one of many issues and that there might be merit to considering a topic such as poverty.

7. Concern was expressed at the possibility that the pilot thematic evaluation report might not be available in time for review by the different relevant intergovernmental bodies and processes before the report was considered by the Committee, should the Committee consider that report at its forty-fourth session in 2004. Clarification was requested as to the specifics of the regulations and rules that govern the timing of the Committee's consideration of evaluation reports, in relation to their consideration by the intergovernmental bodies concerned with the specific programme areas.

8. It was noted that in recent years, the Millennium Summit, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Monterrey Consensus, the Third World Water Forum and Ministerial Conference held in Japan in March 2003 and the G-8 action plan on water had addressed the issue of water. The view was expressed that water was essential to life and human security and that it was important for all countries to promote good governance and capacity-building to pursue an appropriate water policy. Integrated water management was seen as a cross-cutting theme that would contribute to the attainment of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

9. It was also noted that the issue of water was critical to pursuing the goals of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. Since it was a basic service and, as stated in the report, since progress in the management of freshwater had been neither sufficient nor comprehensive, measures needed to be enhanced in order to achieve the goal.

10. The view was expressed that the evaluation would be taken into account in the deliberations of the Commission on Sustainable Development which would take up water as a main agenda item in 2004. To the extent possible, the evaluation should, in turn, take account of the deliberations at the Commission.

Conclusions and recommendations

11. **The Committee decided to defer to its forty-fourth session the selection of a topic for thematic evaluation, for submission to the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-fifth session and subsequently to be reviewed for its usefulness at its forty-sixth session.**

12. **The Committee also decided to request the Office of Internal Oversight Services to further develop topics by elaborating the precise and comprehensive context, objective, scope, methodology and intended utilization of the findings of proposals for a pilot evaluation project.**

United Nations E/AC.51/2003/L.5/Add.38

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
17 June 2003

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Forty-third session
9 June-3 July 2003
Agenda item 9
Adoption of the report of the Committee on its forty-third session

Rapporteur: Mr. Jerry **Kramer** (Canada)

Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation

Item 4 (c)

In-depth evaluation of the programme on the law of the sea and ocean affairs

1. At its 2nd and 3rd meetings, on 9 June 2003, the Committee considered the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the in-depth evaluation of the law of the sea and ocean affairs (E/AC.51/2003/3).

2. The representative of OIOS introduced the report. Representatives of the Secretary-General responded to the questions raised during the Committee's consideration of the report.

Discussion

3. General satisfaction was expressed with the report and the performance of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea. The view was expressed that it was essential to promote the universal acceptance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and its agreements. In that respect, support was expressed for the recommended review by the Division of its capacity to discharge its different functions. Strong support was expressed for the active participation of the Division in decisions made to establish the new inter-agency mechanism requested by the General Assembly in 2002.

4. As regards the proposal to further synthesize the information received from the competent organizations in the annual report, that was not considered necessary. On the efforts undertaken by the Division to study State practice, concern was expressed

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that to supplement the low response rate to surveys sent to Member States, the Division was using information gathered by other competent organizations. It was stated that there were no other competent organizations to provide information on the regulatory practices of States since only Member States were in a position to do so.

5. It was also noted that the quality of the comprehensive annual report on oceans and the law of the sea should be maintained.

6. It was observed that the Division had an important role to promote consensus and foster greater acceptance of the international legal regime for the ocean in terms of sustainable development, which should not be limited to the analysis of the economic benefits expected from participation in the regime.

7. Clarifications were requested on who was responsible for preparing the internal assessments mentioned among the categories of information used for the in-depth evaluation. Details were also requested on the specific benefits that had been outlined to States to encourage their submissions of claims on outer limits of the continental shelf and on the status of the related course manual prepared by the Division. Questions were raised about which countries had benefited from training and the award of fellowships. Clarification was requested on the meaning of reconciling environmental boundaries with administrative or political boundaries.

Conclusions and recommendations

8. **The Committee recommended approval of recommendations 1 to 7 of the in-depth evaluation of the programme on the law of the sea and ocean affairs (E/AC.51/2003/3), subject to the observations set out below.**

9. **The Committee highlighted the important role played by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea in promoting universal participation of the Member States in the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea. In that regard, the Committee emphasized the need to ensure the adequate capacity of the Division to carry out its functions, and that the Division should be encouraged to actively participate in regional cooperation activities on matters relating to oceans and seas.**

10. **The Committee understands that the International Seabed Authority will be involved in the consultations envisaged in recommendation 1 since some of the issues dealt with at such consultations fall within the mandate of the Authority.**

11. **Concerning recommendation 4, the Committee considered that the annual report on oceans and the law of the sea should not include assessments of the overall impact of the efforts of the competent organizations and make suggestions for future activities but rather should focus on the issues pertinent to oceans and seas in a systematic and integrated fashion.**

United Nations E/AC.51/2003/L.5/Add.39

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
24 June 2003

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Forty-third session
9 June-3 July 2003
Agenda item 9
Adoption of the report of the Committee on its forty-third session

Rapporteur: Mr. Jerry **Kramer** (Canada)

Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation

Item 4 (c)

Triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its fortieth session on the in-depth evaluation of global development trends, issues and policies, global approaches to social and microeconomic issues and policies, and the corresponding subprogrammes in the regional commissions

1. At its 2nd and 3rd meeting on 9 June 2003, the Committee considered the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its fortieth session on the in-depth evaluation of global development trends, issues and policies, global approaches to social and microeconomic issues and policies and the corresponding subprogrammes in the regional commissions (E/AC.51/2003/4).

2. The representative of the Office of Internal Oversight Services introduced the report. Representatives of the Office responded to questions raised during the Committee's consideration of the report.

Discussion

3. Satisfaction was expressed that progress had been made on several of the recommendations. It was noted that some recommendations — for example,

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recommendation 4 — had been partially implemented. There was concurrence with the view of the Office of Internal Oversight Services that the review of the capacity of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to carry out better its analysis of socio-economic development trends, recommended by the Committee for Programme and Coordination, should have proceeded sooner.

4. Comments were made regarding the *World Economic and Social Survey*. Given the low profile of that publication, it was suggested that a more rigorous comparison be made with the marketing and distribution of similar publications elsewhere. Considering the greater resonance of similar publications of the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, the value of the *World Economic and Social Survey* was questioned. It was suggested that the Department should not be issuing that report, and that it should focus on providing secretariat functions to the intergovernmental processes rather than formulating its own solutions to global economic issues. While the triennial review mentioned improvements made to the content and presentation of the *Survey*, it did not make it clear whether there was a real effort to reach a wider range of government officials to whom the content of the *Survey* would be of interest. It was suggested that readers should be charged a fee for the *Survey*.

5. Regarding recommendation 4, on better integration of analytical and operational activities of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, it was noted that changes in the form of reorganization did not occur until early 2003. The progress made by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in strengthening its survey was proof that integration could take place. However, this progress raised questions about the state of affairs at the other regional commissions, in particular at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

6. Regarding the recommended exchange of information among the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the regional commissions (recommendation 5), it was observed that the selection of mutually convenient meeting dates was an important factor for obtaining a better exchange.

7. Regarding the implementation of recommendation 8, on mailing lists, there were concerns that the report contained little detail on progress achieved by ECA. A question was posed about the status of efforts by the regional commissions to sell their publications at a price that the regional markets can bear and about what progress could be achieved regarding the tiered pricing strategy set at Headquarters.

Conclusions and recommendations

8. **The Committee recommended approval of the conclusions and the recommendation of the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its fortieth session on the in-depth evaluation of global development trends, issues and policies, global approaches to social and microeconomic issues and policies, and the corresponding subprogrammes in the regional commissions (E/AC.51/2003/4).**

9. **The Committee felt that the importance of the *World Economic and Social Survey* was not fully evaluated in the triennial review. The Committee recommended that the relevant departments consider further ways of**

enhancing its role as a reference tool and requested that its dissemination be promoted as widely as possible, as appropriate.

10. **The Committee stressed the need for regional commissions to redouble their efforts in establishing strong linkages with regional and national institutions that are end-users of the outputs of the commissions' work on regional socio-economic analysis, in order to ensure that the findings of such studies can be taken into account at the country and regional levels.**

United Nations E/AC.51/2003/L.5/Add.40

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
17 June 2003

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Forty-third session
9 June-3 July 2003
Agenda item 9
Adoption of the report of the Committee on its forty-third session

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Rapporteur: Mr. Jerry **Kramer** (Canada)

Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation

Item 4 (c)

Triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its fortieth session on the in-depth evaluation of the advancement of women programme

1. At its 2nd and 3rd meetings, on 9 June, the Committee considered the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee at its fortieth session on the in-depth evaluation of the advancement of women programme (E/AC.51/2003/5).

2. The representative of OIOS introduced the report. Representatives of the Secretary-General responded to the questions raised during the Committee's consideration of the report.

Discussion

3. The Committee expressed satisfaction with the quality of the concise report and its informational thrust. The Committee appreciated the number of results already in evidence due to the joint efforts of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women and the Division for the

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Advancement of Women to implement the recommendations made by the Commission three years ago.

4. The reduction of the backlog (recommendation 1 (a)) in the consideration of State parties' reports by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (from 48 to 17) was applauded. It was observed that the reduction was attributed to ad hoc exceptional measures, and questions were raised on whether consideration had been given to developing a permanent system to deal with this issue. A question was raised about the expected timing of the consideration of the remaining 17 reports.

5. The measures to reduce the outstanding reporting obligations (recommendation 1 (b)) by States parties to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women were commended. The question of how many States had outstanding reporting obligations was raised, and the hope that all States would participate was expressed.

6. The efforts to ensure that non-governmental organizations were informed (recommendation 1 (c)) of a State party's presentation of its report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women were appreciated. At the same time, it was noted that some non-governmental organizations were still unaware of the procedures for submitting reports to the Committee. Further efforts in that respect were required.

7. Support was expressed for the implementation of recommendation 2 since it was preferable for users to access information on the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women directly from the Internet rather than relying on documentation published with a 10-year delay.

8. The Committee stressed its interest in the quick implementation of recommendation 3 on achieving gender balance in the United Nations Secretariat, and requested that the effectiveness of the new recruitment, promotion and placement system be evaluated as soon as it was deemed feasible.

9. Regarding mention of a conference to be held in 2005 to review progress achieved 10 years after the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Committee observed that current proposals envisaged holding the 10-year review of the Conference in the context of the annual session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

10. The Committee commended the efforts of the Division for the Advancement of Women and other United Nations programmes and entities to discuss strategies and share work plans (recommendation 5).

11. The Committee commended and encouraged the determination of the Division to facilitate the increased participation of NGOs in the work of the Commission on the Status of Women.

12. The Committee commended the efforts of the Special Adviser for the Advancement of Women and Gender Issues to develop a strategy for an ombudsman for gender issues.

Conclusions and recommendations

13. **The Committee recommended approval of the conclusions of the triennial review.**

14. **The Committee recommended that the triennial review and its conclusions thereon be submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women for review and action, as appropriate.**